

# Class Struggle

The Workers' Republic Women's Liberation International Socialism

30p

Irish Workers Group

Irish section of the

MRCI

June 1989

No 14

## REVOLUTION NOT PERESTROIKA!

The convulsions of world Stalinism deepen. The latest and most stunning display of resistance and political defiance is China where on Friday 21 April, after a week of protest and marches across its main cities, 200,000 students and workers converged on Beijing's Tiananmen Square to honour the memory of Hu Yaobang.

Yaobang has become the symbol of the Chinese masses' growing determination to rid themselves of what was described in their banners, posters and wall letters as "the wolves who have ruled us for forty years". But while western commentators were only too eager to see in these protests "one more example" of the rejection of socialism, the fact that the students and workers carried red flags and sang the *Internationale* underlines graphically that they know only too well that the return to the "freedoms" of world capitalism offers them nothing.

### Reforms

Indeed, their political protests against the Chinese dictatorship have been directly fueled by the effects of the Gorbachev-style market reforms introduced two years ago by the Chinese leadership in a desperate attempt to save from total collapse the whole parasitic and bureaucratic system of state planning over which they preside and feed off.

These reforms had quickly resulted in a deepening of the misery for the majority of workers and peasants as prices soared, and the sharpening of the gulf between them and the growing army of speculators, profiteers and entrepreneurs and their friends within the ruling bureaucracy.

So great was the mounting anger over the last two years that the Chinese leaders didn't risk the introduction of the "democratic" political reforms embarked upon by Gorbachev in the Soviet Union. The effects of such would mean an intensification of the social divisions.

Instead the army and police have cracked down ruthlessly on all forms of protest and resistance, and it was a result of this that initially sparked off the student protests, to be later joined by the ranks of the workers and peasants.

### Soviet masses on the march

Millions of Soviet workers a month previously used the opportunity provided by elections to the Supreme Soviet to say exactly what they think of the bureaucracy that rules them. In city after city working class voters said no to the candidates most clearly identified with the privileges and oppressive rule of the bureaucracy.

Whatever Mikhail Gorbachev may have thought he was doing when he created a new electoral system in the Soviet Union, the elections have enabled the Soviet workers to give voice to their own frustrations at Gorbachev's *perestroika*.

All around them they hear talk of radical change. Yet, as in China, material life, if anything, is changing for the worse. But the election gave them the means to serve notice to the ruling bureaucracy, that they are not prepared to go on in the old way.

In Moscow the City Mayor was fought to a dead heat by a working class woman, leader of a team of house painters. He refused to be interviewed by *Moscow News* because he was too busy. She told the paper:

*"My rival is certainly a worthy person, but I intend to fight him. We workers have a lot of problems. And that's why I'm precisely the one who should stand up for the interests of working people."*

### Victories

Those who "stand in lines" at the shops—as opposed to those with special shops and perks to save the queuing—scored victories time and time again in the elections.

In the USSR's second largest city, Leningrad, Gorbachev's loyal Politburo



▲ Chinese masses sing the *Internationale* in Tiananmen Square

member, Solovyov, was struck off the voting paper by 55% of the electorate in a working class district.

Most significantly, Leningrad's party boss Anatoly Gerasimov received only 15% of the vote compared with 74% for a 28 year old shipyard worker.

### Struck off

Kiev party leader Masik and Mayor Zgursky, both standing unopposed, were struck off the register by most electors. Two thirds of the voters struck off Masik's name.

In the Baltic republics only party leaders supporting demands for greater national independence were returned.

In Armenia, where national feelings run high after Gorbachev's refusal to grant Nagorno Karabakh's demand to join Armenia, opposition to the bureaucratic regime took a different form. Officials had to keep the polling booths open for an extra two hours to even meet the 50% quorum required.

In Moscow Boris Yeltsin, kicked out of the Politburo 18

months ago for his open attacks on bureaucratic privilege, was swept to a decisive victory winning almost 90% of the vote.

Yeltsin's ability to relate to the anger of the masses, his openly populist campaign, which mobilized thousands of workers in factory meetings and street demonstrations, stands as a warning to Gorbachev of the dangers he and his clique of rulers face as the mighty Soviet working class is roused from decades of political slumber.

What the elections will mean for the USSR's political future is not yet certain. Over 2,000 elected deputies are now due to vote in a supreme Soviet of just over 500. That in turn will elect a President, presumably Mikhail Gorbachev.

The election results, in reality, give him a stronger platform to stand as the only man who can hold the ring between Yeltsin and Ligachev, as the candidate who can stand above the factions.

80% of the election's candidates were members of the Soviet Communist Party. Of the 2,000 elected representa-

tives a significant proportion represent the nominees of "social" organizations such as the All-Union Voluntary Temperance Society and the All-Union Society of Inventors and Rationalisers.

### Decide

In the last analysis the ruling bureaucracy will decide on the composition of the new Supreme Soviet.

But that bureaucracy remains riven with conflict. Gorbachev's ability to hold the competing factions in any kind of unified leadership is further weakened by the election results.

Gorbachev himself received a blow when twelve Central Committee members voted against him in the election of the Party's 100 guaranteed seats. Ligachev did even worse, with 78 rejections.

The Soviet press has an air of embarrassed silence about the results. Press chief Gennady Gerasimov has expressed the shock to the bureaucracy delivered by the working class by announcing that: "The Party will decide why it happened".

The working class of the USSR has spoken. But these elections are not enough. Even if a Supreme Soviet of 500 Yeltsinists was elected, the political power, the obscene privileges and the parasitic rule of the bureaucracy would remain, in all fundamentals, intact.

Attempts to reform the bureaucratic regime of Stalinism, however radical they may be, are doomed to failure. They cannot change its essentially counter-revolutionary nature. They cannot overcome its determination to preserve its reactionary rule.

Only the independent organization of the working class under the leadership of a revolutionary party can, through political revolution, sweep away all the bureaucratic obstacles that today block the transition to real communism.

Forward to political revolution in the USSR and China!

# EDITORIAL

## Burning issues for real action

The turnout on Thursday 13 April of only 400 people on the border to protest against the extradition of Paul Kane underlined once more the bankruptcy of the Sinn Féin dominated Anti-Extradition campaign. The campaign's perspective of appealing to the so-called "republican grassroots" of Fianna Fáil as the basis for a mass campaign that could force the Fianna Fáil government to back down on the issue of extradition has been seen once more for what it always was—hokum.



▲ Kane extradited. PHOTO: DEREK SPEIRS/REPORT

As the Irish Workers Group argued at the founding conference of the campaign two years ago, such a perspective merely creates illusions in Fianna Fáil and make the tasks of winning workers and trade unionists—the class victims of Fianna Fáil capitalist policies—even more difficult. This perspective, we further argued, reflected the purely nationalist limits of Sinn Féin's politics and programme and its inability to appeal to the Irish working class with a clear anti-capitalist strategy and tactics.

*Republican News* reports how the latest example of what it calls "Haughey's treachery and Fianna Fáil's shame" had been "the last straw" for eminent and veteran Fianna Fáilers. They have resigned. It seems that these gentlemen discovered that the party they have been in for nearly fifty years wasn't the democratic party they had always thought it to be, concluding that the party cannot be changed from within. Quite. How long will it be before Sinn Féin and the Anti-Extradition campaign begin to learn the same lesson?

Meanwhile, the same *Republican News* provides graphic accounts of the extent to which the repressive forces of British imperialism in the North have, since the Sinn Féin access to the media was banned, stepped up their massive house searches in nationalist areas throughout the North.

*Republican News* reports that whole areas like Shantallow and Creggan in Derry and parts of Strabane have simply

been closed down by a blanket cordon of army and police reminiscent of the martial law on the Falls in 1971. No one is allowed in or out while the search goes on. Houses have been smashed and any resistance met with beatings and arrests. The continued lifting, brutalizing and framing of working class nationalist youth goes hand in hand with this.

And yet, Sinn Féin oppose any strategy which would directly address such burning issues—a strategy of building united action from within these nationalist working class communities, involving workers, socialists and republicans—which would begin to offer real resistance in marches, demonstrations and in strike action, to the brutal policies of the imperialists in the North.

Similarly, the reports just published by the continuous household survey and the Fair Employment Agency (FEA) demonstrate the stark disparities in job opportunities and living standards between Catholics and Protestants in the North. For example, the earning category saw Protestants far ahead of Catholics with 21% of Protestants earning over £10,000 per annum compared to only 13% of Catholics. 33% of Protestant households had incomes of over £10,000, 21% of Catholics. Catholics are still twice as likely to experience long term unemployment and are two and a half times more likely to be unemployed. They are three times more likely to live in sub-standard accommodation. 37% depended on state benefits, compared to 20% of Protestants. Things are worsening and the FEA report underlined why—the continued and intensifying massive discrimination in employment.

Focusing on employment policies in Ulster higher education establishments, they had found that in the University of Ulster, which employs 2,400 people, 64% of the workforce is Protestant, 16% Catholic—a ratio of four to one. In Queen's University which employs 3,111 people, 60% are Protestant and 17% are Catholic—a ratio of three to one. 80% of maintenance staff are Protestant with Catholics represented in catering, barbers and casual attendants.

These statistics underline that the ugly system of Orange and Masonic patronage continues to thrive throughout Ulster. As the recession has deepened, the system has ensured that Protestants are able to survive much more effectively than Catholics. Twenty years after the formation of the Civil Rights movement discrimination against Catholics remains a scandalous abuse of democratic rights, another issue, of burning and immediate importance around which united action should be built.

But at Dublin meeting of April 11 last called by Sinn Féin in furtherance of the "mass anti-imperialist movement" announced by Gerry Adams at Sinn Féin's party conference, the only plan was for a march—in August! —to commemorate August '69 when British troops first appeared in the streets. The march—which will take place under the banner for 'A New Ireland'—and the perspective motivating it, offers nothing to the beleaguered anti-unionist working class in the six counties. ■

Published 1 May 1989 by the Irish Workers' Group,

Irish section of the

Movement for a Revolutionary Communist International (MRCI)

12 Langrishe Place, Dublin 1, Ireland.

## Labour Conference: A Defeat is a Defeat

Labour's March conference, the second since the break up of the last Coalition, met with Spring determined to crush all remaining opposition to his leadership from the anti-coalitionists of the 1983-87 period.

Spring succeeded by packing the conference with his own followers, conjuring up a thousand members (equivalent to 20% of the total Labour Party membership) for his own constituency party in North Kerry and thereby enormously inflating his number of delegates. By a bureaucratic manoeuvre, Tralee became the reddest spot on the political landscape.

At the end of 1987 Spring attacked the union leaders for collaborating with Haughey in the Programme for National Recovery—his revenge for their sniping at the coalition government. At Tralee, Spring and the union leaders made up. The peace-making was done on the most cynical basis of non-interference between the party and the unions in each other's affairs. At Tralee, a motion opposing the Programme for National Recovery was squashed by the party and trade union leaders.

Labour Left, under the banner of "Towards Consensus and Partnership" signalled their refusal to fight Spring's policies. A new Economic Policy document, which was agreed between Stagg and Spring, was massively carried. The policy was a deliberate shift to recognize the permanent role of private capital as a driving force in the economy. When several activists tried to speak against the economic policy, they were refused permission to do so. And Labour Left, the self-styled democrats in the party, refused to oppose this censorship.

The chickens came home to roost for Stagg and Labour Left who lost the symbolic post of vice-chairperson and lost seats in the elections for the Administrative Council, which is now dominated by Spring's clique. Such is the price of "Consensus and Partnership"!

The biggest blow was against Militant. The vote to ban them was passed by a majority of about 2 to 1, with the ITGWU voting for and the FWU abstaining.

An honest balance sheet of the Tralee conference can only conclude that Spring and the right are more firmly than ever in the saddle. There are two main reasons for this. The first reason is the beleaguered state of the class struggle in the unions. Here the Programme for National Recovery has wreaked havoc, with strike figures the lowest for 25 years, demoralized whole sections of activists and emboldened the right throughout the labour movement as a whole. The second reason has to do with the politics of Labour Left and Militant.

### Militant's "Analysis"

Militant predictably tell us that: "The Party Conference did not in any respect signify a shift to the right among the rank and file activists. The left won a steady 40% of the vote on the key issues", and:

"These represent the most active core of Labour's members. Given a lead their opposition could be decisive in halting the gallop to the right and setting Labour on the course of action it should be taking" (April 1989, p.7).

For a start, this is nonsense. Support for the Economic Policy document, which underlined the

move to the right got the support of more than 90% of the delegates. Doesn't that tell Militant anything?

They argue, correctly, that the conference was rigged but instead of seeing this as the ruthlessness with which Spring and his ilk were determined to achieve victory, Militant use it to disguise the fact that the conference went along with the rigging in order to get rid of Militant.

Militant's pathetic belief, against all the evidence, that 'the 40% Labour Party rank and file' are somehow a left wing committed to class struggle is part and parcel of their view of the Labour Party which sees an inherent conflict between a leadership that sells out and a "socialist" rank and file capable of being won to revolutionary socialist politics. The vast majority's support for Spring's economic policy document reveals best the real nature of the party.

There are tensions in the Labour Party, of course, between different currents, most of all between the more honest sections of the rank and file and the most corrupt and openly bourgeois parliamentary leadership and the union bureaucrats and their hacks who control the trade union and party machines. But the self-selected membership as a whole share deeply in the common reformist outlook and policies of the party.

For revolutionaries to exploit tensions within such a party means an entirely different perspective to that which Militant offers. That is a revolutionary perspective of fighting in united front struggles to pit the best elements of the membership against the leadership with the aim of winning them to a mass revolutionary party—an aim that in the process of achieving it can only mean the break up of the Labour Party and its hold over sections of workers and trade unionists. Militant rejects such an analysis and perspective. Why?

The fact is that its continued impotence over a period of almost twenty years, their blindness to setback after setback including the most serious yet at Tralee, is because they share, underneath the 'Trotskyist' rhetoric, the same bankrupt parliamentary reformist perspective of achieving socialism in Ireland via a Labour government.

### Labour Left's Role

Far from being as Militant claim, the basis for a radical rank and file current for socialism, therefore Labour Left offer nothing but an alternative reformist leadership of the party.

## SWM Censured

The Socialist Workers Movement was censured for sectarian exclusion of other socialists from advertised meetings at the AGM of the Socialist Society in Trinity College on April 14th.

SWM had organized and advertised a day of "open" meetings on Marxism for students two months previously in TCD. The college meeting room which they used was booked in the name of the Socialist Society, yet the SWM publicly refused to permit an IWG member of the Socialist Society committee to attend meetings.

SWM had earlier announced that it would not help to build the So-

cialist Society as a forum for joint action and debate with other socialists. However, they continued to use the Society's auspices to book meeting rooms in the College. IWG argued in the society that they should continue to enjoy these facilities despite their sectarian attitude. However, the exclusion of other socialists from meetings advertised in the College was deemed to be the last straw.

A resolution of the AGM refuses all further Socialist Society auspices to the SWM until they undertake in writing to desist from such sectarian exclusion of other socialist points of view from meetings advertised as open. ■

# SOUTH VOTE LABOUR PARTY

THE EUROPEAN Parliament has little power and the further "integration" of the EC will not give it many real powers either. Even the vastly more significant national parliaments are little more than "democratic" camouflage for the real levers of power which are in the hands of ministers, big capitalists, police chiefs and generals. Nevertheless, parliamentary elections are important episodes of ideological struggle when the mass of workers can learn of their political potential as a class and have their illusions in bourgeois democracy challenged.

This is true also of the Euro elections, where, in addition, vital questions of international unity of our class can be posed in a sharp way in revolutionary propaganda.

Unless revolutionary communists have sufficient base in the class to stand their own candidates they can only put forward their ideas and action programme by adopting united front tactics towards the parties which, for the moment, stand as the established political representatives of the working class organisations.

In the 26 Counties there is only one such party which rests upon the mass workers' organisations, the trade unions. Although a majority of workers' votes still go to Fianna Fáil, Labour remains the largest party of the working class movement and is the main focus for the reformist illusions of organized workers. It is for this reason alone

# EURO ELECTIONS

that it is legitimate for revolutionaries to canvass a Labour vote. It has *nothing* to do with the programme or personalities of the Labour Party. Calling for a Labour vote, therefore, has nothing in common with the slippery call to "vote left" which has been the stock in trade of centrist groups such as SWM. That slogan is given a different meaning by each group or from one election to the next, including or excluding one or other of Labour, Sinn Féin or WP depending on what rhetoric they are peddling at the time.

We say: Vote Labour without illusions! In this way, stand on the side of the working class and break with Fi-

**The Euro Parliament cannot be an instrument of working class power, but it can and must be used by MEPs from the Socialist, Labour and Stalinist parties, and by MEPs elected by movements of struggle against imperialism, to expose the secrets of the European bourgeoisie to the workers. It must be used as a tribune to rally the workers' struggles outside parliament. We even demand of them that they use what limited powers they have to the full to delay and derail each and every anti-working class proposal.**

**Put the reformist workers' parties and revolutionary nationalists to the test. Expose the hollowness of their claims to represent the interests of the workers and small farmers.**

For the Socialist United States of Europe!

anna Fáil and the other openly capitalist parties. But fight for an action programme which challenges the reformist leaders within our class. Put them to the test. Fight to force them to champion our demands or be swept aside!

IN THE NORTH there is no party of the working class, even a reformist one. The class is divided and subordinated to reactionary loyalist parties, or to illusions in Irish nationalism as the solution to their oppression. The continuing open revolt of the nationalist population against that state makes every election there, in the first instance, a plebiscite: for or against the sectarian statelet of British imperialism

- Against unemployment — for the 35-hour week without loss of pay throughout the EC.
- For the leveling upward of all social benefits in the EC!
- Against the CAP profits which raise food prices for workers we demand the sliding scale of wages!
- No to immigration controls or expulsion of immigrant workers or their families. Full political and social rights and residence, for them in all EC countries!
- For workers' solidarity in struggle and international blacking action.
- Break up NATO! No to modernisation of missiles! Not a penny, not a man or woman for defence!
- Defend the USSR and the other degenerate Workers States!
- For solidarity with the semi-colonial regimes in their resistance to European imperialism. Cancel the debts owed to the European Community!

Likewise in local council elections we call for a vote in the North only for Sinn Féin. Force them to use these councils as platforms for mobilizing struggle by workers, protestant as well as catholic, unemployed and waged, and their communities, against all cuts and economic attacks. And they must use these platforms to mobilize for united front action against repression! ■

At present the German bourgeoisie has no need for fascism on a large scale. But it would be criminal to allow this fact to obscure the very real threat that the right poses. Already the ruling CDU is looking for tougher cuts in welfare spending and considering anti-immigrant measures.

Of course in formal terms, the REP, NPD and DVU are not Nazi organisations on the pattern of the twenties. But their policies such as the abolition of trade unions, the scrapping of welfare, forcing those on benefits to work, compulsory training for young women in the ideals of "motherhood", restrictions on the rights of AIDS sufferers and the return of territory supposedly lost, including the whole of East Germany and parts of Czechoslovakia, Poland and the USSR, are all the common property of the fascist far right in Europe.

Their recent electoral supporters are not all dedicated Hitlerites. Nonetheless, these parties contain organised fascists who are creating an arena in which to grow. Every success will encourage them to go

beyond parliamentarianism and to organise direct physical action whether that be demos in immigrant areas, attacks on left wing meetings or supposedly symbolic actions such as ceremonies around the Germania statue on Germany's national day.

After decades of semi-secrecy, the fascists are not united either organisationally or programmatically. Increased public activity will help them to overcome these problems. Already the NPD, set up twenty years ago mainly by old Nazis, has succeeded in presenting a joint electoral slate with the DVU. In Berlin, where the constitutional ban on fascist organisations is enforced a bit more rigorously, the new REP has acted as an umbrella for the proscribed organisations.

The advances they have made are reflected in the financial backing they now receive, particularly the DVU, which is backed by the millionaire publisher Gerhard Frey. In January they spent £2 million for the European elections.

Fascism in Germany, then,

# NORTH VOTE SINK FEIN

in Ireland?

In that plebiscite we stand unconditionally with those nationalist workers and other sections who are in struggle against the state. Sinn Féin, which stands at the head of that struggle, are the focus for the nationalist illusions of the most oppressed and combative sections in the North. This means at present a tactic of "critical support" for Sinn Féin. In solidarising with the anti-imperialist struggle in this way, however, our aim is to test and expose in front of their followers the their bankruptcy in strategy and tactics. We argue for immediate concrete demands while putting forward the communist perspectives of the Permanent Revolution for the Worker's Republic and international communism.

We fight to persuade proletarian supporters of Sinn Féin to force them to mobilize mass united-front action, of workers, socialists and republicans; against all aspects of repression and to subordinate all guerrilla actions to the mass democracy and the needs of such a struggle.

Likewise in local council elections we call for a vote in the North only for Sinn Féin. Force them to use these councils as platforms for mobilizing struggle by workers, protestant as well as catholic, unemployed and waged, and their communities, against all cuts and economic attacks. And they must use these platforms to mobilize for united front action against repression! ■

is not a left wing paranoid fantasy. It exists and it is growing. The fight to destroy it will be central to the building of a revolutionary communist party. The key policies needed in such a fight are:

No reliance on the capitalist state — no to state bans on the fascists which only serve to prevent working-class mobilisations against them.

For direct action to stop the fascists. Take the campaign into the unions and the factories. Every mobilisation by the fascists or their front organisations should be physically confronted on the largest possible scale. Build anti-fascist defence squads... no one who goes on a fascist march should come away feeling the better for it!

Build on the example of Dusseldorf postal workers who refused to handle mail connected with the DVU's postal campaign. No to "popular fronts" with the "anti-fascist" bourgeoisie who will run a mile from effective working class action. After all, the fascists hope to recruit by identifying the left with the parlia-



# MRCI NEWS

Movement for a Revolutionary Communist International

## PERU

WE ARE proud to announce that Poder Obrero is now the official section of the Movement for a Revolutionary Communist International in Peru. The comrades' application for membership was accepted at the MRCI's Easter meeting in London, which was attended by delegates from all the sections. This is a major step forward for our movement, being our first section outside Europe. In the course of our relationship with Poder Obrero the MRCI has already learned much about applying the Trotskyist programme in the difficult conditions of militarism and Bonapartism in Latin America.

The Easter meeting also discussed and adopted a set of theses on women's oppression, dealing with its origins and changing form in differing class societies, the family in imperialist and semi-colonial countries and key issues of programme and organisation. In adopting theses representing the position of our entire organisation the MRCI again showed itself to be on course for its transformation into a democratic centralist tendency at its Congress later this year. ■

## BRITAIN

The prospect of scab unionism making a big step forward in Britain is posed by the planned merger of the engineers union (AEU) and the electricians union EETPU, which was expelled from the TUC last year.

Instead of leading a fight against closures and redundancies both unions have been pursuing a policy of signing single union — no strike deals. Both have a track record of treachery that would do a Judas proud.

Unity with the AEU would provide Hammond's EETPU with the ballast necessary to hold together a scab federation. A merger would open the way for Hammond's re-entry into the TUC via the back door.

Workers Power have argued for opposition to the anti-working class policies of the AEU leaders and for the smashing of the yellow union, EETPU. The membership of AEU must be mobilized to oppose the merger. Special bulletins must be produced and meetings organised to explain the case against EETPU. An anti-merger campaign can and must be built now to co-ordinate the rank and file resistance to this rotten deal. ■

# German Fascism on the Rise

IN THIS centenary year of Hitler's birth (20 April), Germany's extreme right wing is celebrating a series of electoral advances. Since last September, the German People's Union (DVU), the Republicans (REP) and the National Party (NPD) have, between them, won seats in local parliaments in Bremerhaven, Frankfurt and Berlin. The REP will have two seats in the Bonn parliament from next year.

The reasons for these successes are not difficult to see. West Germany has over two million unemployed. There is a serious shortage of housing. Many fear that 1992 will wipe out small businesses, both urban and rural. The Federal Government is increasingly seen as incompetent and indecisive.

The existing trade union and social democratic leaders are offering no decisive alternative to the working class against these ills. What we are witnessing is the creation of the political and economic conditions in which the ideas of the old fascists once again fall on fertile ground.

At present the German bourgeoisie has no need for fascism on a large scale. But it would be criminal to allow this fact to obscure the very real threat that the right poses. Already the ruling CDU is looking for tougher cuts in welfare spending and considering anti-immigrant measures.

Of course in formal terms, the REP, NPD and DVU are not Nazi organisations on the pattern of the twenties. But their policies such as the abolition of trade unions, the scrapping of welfare, forcing those on benefits to work, compulsory training for young women in the ideals of "motherhood", restrictions on the rights of AIDS sufferers and the return of territory supposedly lost, including the whole of East Germany and parts of Czechoslovakia, Poland and the USSR, are all the common property of the fascist far right in Europe.

Their recent electoral supporters are not all dedicated Hitlerites. Nonetheless, these parties contain organised fascists who are creating an arena in which to grow. Every success will encourage them to go

beyond parliamentarianism and to organise direct physical action whether that be demos in immigrant areas, attacks on left wing meetings or supposedly symbolic actions such as ceremonies around the Germania statue on Germany's national day.

After decades of semi-secrecy, the fascists are not united either organisationally or programmatically. Increased public activity will help them to overcome these problems. Already the NPD, set up twenty years ago mainly by old Nazis, has succeeded in presenting a joint electoral slate with the DVU. In Berlin, where the constitutional ban on fascist organisations is enforced a bit more rigorously, the new REP has acted as an umbrella for the proscribed organisations.

The advances they have made are reflected in the financial backing they now receive, particularly the DVU, which is backed by the millionaire publisher Gerhard Frey. In January they spent £2 million for the European elections.

Fascism in Germany, then,

is not a left wing paranoid fantasy. It exists and it is growing. The fight to destroy it will be central to the building of a revolutionary communist party. The key policies needed in such a fight are:

Unite the forces of the left. For a united front against the fascists! There will be no shortage of conferences and resolutions against fascism. Within them revolutionaries will pose

## Hitler's birthday in TCD

On April 20th a number of extreme rightists students, previously involved in hosting fascist campaigner David Irving, gathered at TCD's Graduate Memorial Building to mark Hitler's birthday. Half a dozen anti-fascist students, Socialist Society members and others, maintained a presence in the GMB in readiness to protest at any overt celebration of Hitler. Nothing transpired during the long standoff, but the right decided on rapid and brutal reprisals.

The anti-fascist students were followed to a nearby cafe by some extreme rightists. One of these proto-fascists recruited five or six thugs, led them into the cafe

and pointed out the left activists who were immediately set upon. They chased off their attackers with the aid of staff who called the police.

These young scions of the Irish bourgeoisie, reveling in their defence of fascism, should be exposed for the political vermin that they are. All those who opposed the driving out of Irving as an affront to "democracy" should now see the proof of what the TCD Socialist Society argued, that the invitation to Irving was not an academic debate but a step towards building a proto-fascist group with no qualms about using organized thuggery against their political opponents.

THE RE-MERGING OF THE ITGWU AND FWUI, after 66 years of disastrous division, was secretly negotiated in a matter of weeks at the end of 1988. The new *Services, Industrial, Professional and Technical Union* will come into being on the first day of 1990 under the general presidency of John Carroll who will rule it for one week before his retirement. (Hence the agreed schedule!) Already further unions such as the Marine Port & General Workers' Union are being drawn into the merger which could grow considerably as the union bureaucracy at large re-organizes. TASS and ASTMS have already merged in MSF. The 3 teacher unions have opened merger talks and the smaller unions are being steadily amalgamated with the larger.

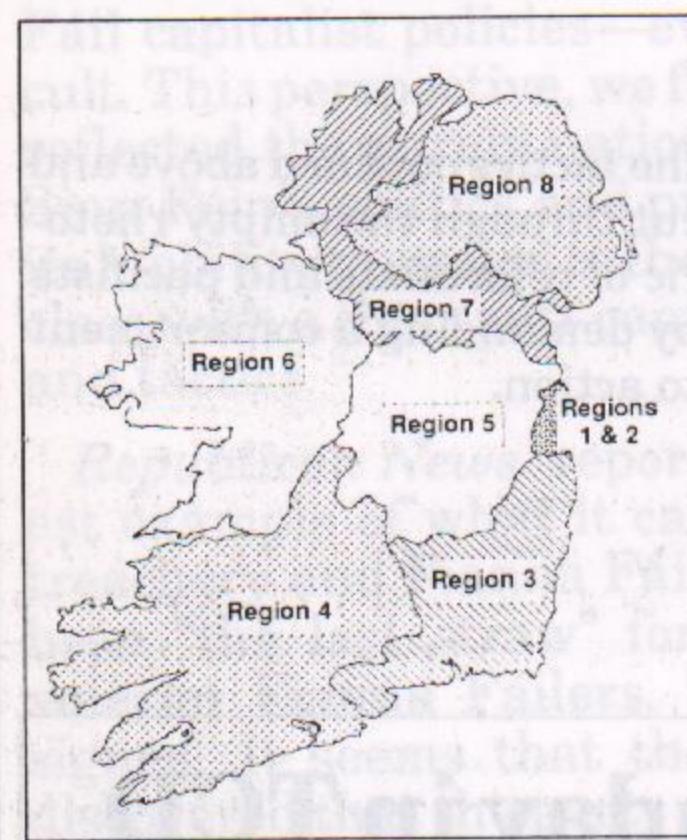
SIPTU, the biggest ever trade union merger in Ireland has been accurately described by its architects as "the creation of a new Union with a number of radically new characteristics" (*Unity—FWUI Journal, special issue, Spring '89*). Most of the new Rule Book for SIPTU is an amalgam of broadly similar rules taken from both unions, but a number of fundamental changes without precedent in either union have been inserted over the heads of the members.

What, therefore, is at issue in the new SIPTU that should cause militants and socialists to rally workers against it? And in the event of the merger going ahead, what are the new threats that it will pose to the rank and file in their struggles?

When it was first announced, *Class Struggle* argued that SIPTU "offers Attley and Carroll & Co. a major opportunity to transform the whole nature of trade unionism in Ireland in a disastrous direction. ... They are determined to eradicate the traditions of militant action and any concept of class struggle". This was evidently the trend of their statements when they announced the new union. The ability of the members to wage industrial war is the single most important question about SIPTU, but on this issue future trends cannot be guessed from the rule-book but must be deduced from a broader assessment. As a step towards clearly understanding the new developments, however, a careful look at the new structures and rules is necessary.

#### Power structures

In the new rules, the "Branch", usually involving over 1,000 workers of similar grade from a range of workplaces, is still defined as the base organisation of the union. In fact the branch is not the base organisation now, nor will it be in SIPTU. The



▲ The eight SIPTU regions

workplace is the base organisation of any trade union, but the bureaucracy has always feared to devolve any formal "branch" powers upon the workplace organisation — it is too close to the rank and file! The base organisation, for them, is the maximum body of members that an unelected official can administer and control. The workplace section hardly exists at all in the rules!

The fiction is maintained that the branch allows the membership to control the workings of the movement. In practice it remains a committee of a few dedicated individuals who act as a rubber stamp for the unaccountable, unelected full-time official

*best of both worlds — the intimacy and accessibility of a new locally based organisation backed up by the power and resources of the national body*" (*Unity special*).

If anything, the new electoral system will make members even more remote from the formal structures of SIPTU. FWUI leader, Attley has claimed that regional bodies would counteract the "danger" of a "monolithic" union organisation. In fact the new union, with 210,000, would not be much bigger than the ITGWU was in the mid 70s, and only one-third bigger than the ITGWU is today.

As before, the branch will rarely have more than one meeting per year for members. It will remain as remote as ever from the workplace, thus guaranteeing that very few will attend or participate in the formal life of the union.

Just as in the FWUI and ITGWU, the real structure of the SIPTU will be the pyramid of full-time officials, about whom the rules say almost nothing at all! A small number of these officials who rise to the top will eventually graduate from their status as employees to stand for "election" as union chiefs — General President, Vice President and General Secretary. These are, in theory, controlled by the elected National Executive Council. In SIPTU this "elected" body will become even less accountable than before and more self-perpetuating, and will identify much more with the full-time General Officers, as we see below.

#### Sowing new divisions

The most dramatic change, however, is in the breakup of the new union into 8 regions based on Dublin and the historic provinces but with Northern Ireland forming Region 8 separate from the rest of Ulster. Region 8, with mainly nationalist ITGWU members, will thus be the weakest region numerically. This particular division will insulate the rest of the movement from the issues facing Six-County workers, especially the workers most oppressed by the sectarian state. Such issues will be treated as "regional" and be "dealt with" at a Regional Executive Council and a separate Regional Delegate Conference!

Contrary to the explanations of the bureaucrats for this regional policy, neither union has ever been lacking in local presence throughout the provinces, as witness the fact that so many Labour Party seats are rooted in provincial areas thanks to the work and influence of the big general unions. ITGWU halls are to be found in many provincial cities and towns. The Regional structure is not designed for any practical need of the membership and it is a patent lie to claim that it "would offer the members the

workplace organisation — it is too close to the rank and file!

The base organisation, for them, is the maximum body of members that an unelected official can administer and control. The workplace section hardly exists at all in the rules!

None of the publicity brochures or speeches of the union bosses have explained how

# SIPTU TRANSFORMING IRISH TRADE UNIONISM

*but in what direction?*

the regional divisions are compatible with the existing systems of *national* bargaining for each industrial sector, less still how they will improve such arrangements. On the contrary, it is no secret that the existing ITGWU "National Group" officials for different industrial sectors are to be demoted in favour of 8 new Regional Secretaries — powerful full-time, unelected officials who will rule over each region. The Rules devolve industrial business, disputes with employers etc. on the regions (no. 86).

Rule 67 defines the purpose of the regions — "to encourage democratic expression within the Union and to facilitate the development of regional autonomy". The pursuit of such "autonomy" can only weaken the trade union movement where it matters most — in its ability to confront the bosses *nationally* right across the working class and would undermine the control of the bureaucracy itself, for the division between these two unions runs through every industry and service sector in the 26 Counties. (The FWUI has no northern membership.)

In each region, branch delegates (on a ratio of 1 per 100 members) will meet in a re-

gional conference every two years, with all the formalities of Executive report, branch motions, committee elections of a separate national trade union. The few activists who today still think it worthwhile to attend branch AGMs to try to influence the union's policy will find very little incentive to raise issues of union policy in a regional charade such as this where discussions of national policy have no relevance.

In each alternate year the Branch will elect delegates in a ratio of 1 to 500 members for the purposes of the national conference. This means that national conferences will only be every second year, with less accountability and less possibility of imposing mandates on the bureaucracy.

#### Regional Collaboration

In a relatively backward country where the dominant theme of all political life is "development", especially of the provinces, there is even the likelihood that these regional divisions will drag organised workers into competition between the regions for development projects, notably those funded by the EC Social Fund.

Regionalisation, in a society dominated by populist bourgeois politics, carries a special danger of deeper col-

laboration with the local bourgeoisie and its "development" plans and agencies in each region. What the union leaders have attempted at national level in their deals with Haughey will be carried further at provincial level, but less visibly and more "intimately" with the local bourgeoisie.



While a powerful rank and file movement *might* transform the regional bodies into organs of struggle to lead both rural and urban masses against the bourgeois system in every corner of the country, the concrete reality is rather that these regional divisions will in every way undermine and set back the rank and file in the *class* struggle against Irish capitalism.

#### "One member, one vote"

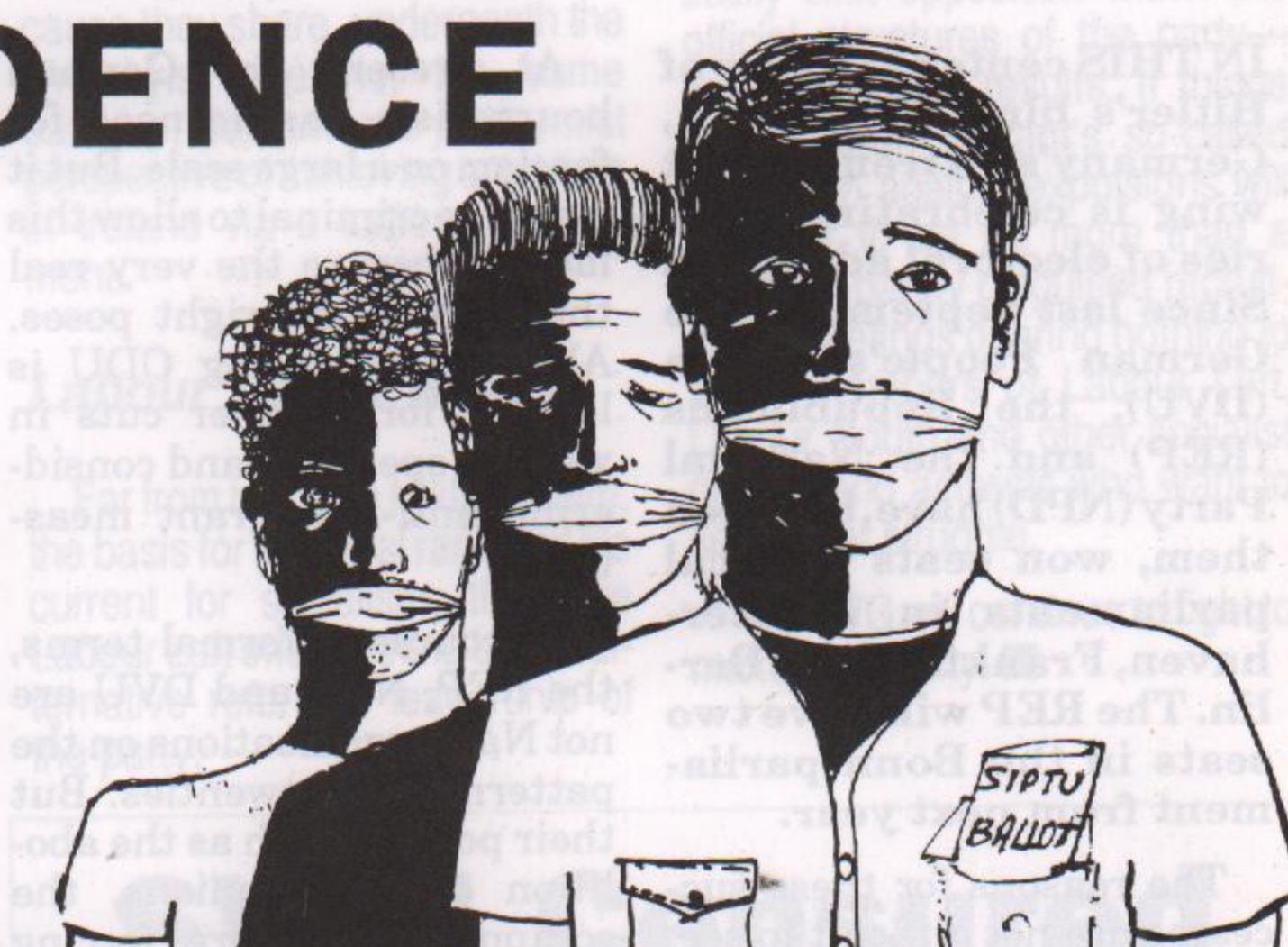
Dead as the present FWUI and ITGWU structures may be in the absence of a rank-and-file movement, SIPTU enshrines a method of election which will make workers'

# CONFIDENCE TRICK

FWUI and ITGWU head offices deliberately kept secret from their members the details of rule changes and new structures until after the annual meetings of branch members. As we reported in *Class Struggle* no.13 they also ruled out of order attempts at branch level to bring the merger terms under the democratic control of the members through amendments at a delegate conference. The ITGWU went directly to the postal ballot vote, holding only a token "conference" in which no votes were taken.

In the FWUI, delegates were elected by branches without any mandates from the members on any aspect of the merger. Only in the first two weeks of April were they supplied with copies of the new rule book and summoned to Branch Committee meetings.

In the two weeks before the special conference on 15 April, FWUI officials swung into action and got over 20 branch committees to mandate their delegates in favour of the merger. In all cases this was done on the basis of very brief discussion with little prior



chance to study the rules or consider the issues. Six branches resisted the pressure and left the issue open. Two branch committees imposed mandates against the SIPTU terms. Not a single branch, however, was allowed to table any amendment on any aspect of the whole package. This use of (usually) volunteer Branch Committees to mandate the often larger and usually directly elected branch delegations has no basis in the rules and is undemocratic.

Such was the confidence trick that produced a vote of 249 to 36 in favour of SIPTU at the FWUI conference. The delegates' hands had been tied before they went in the door.

Their "recommendation" in favour of SIPTU will be used to guarantee a Yes vote in the postal ballot of all the members. Over 200,000 members were due to receive their first ever personal copy of a union rule book and a ballot paper — if the head offices could get hold of all their home addresses! In this plebiscite the bureaucrats were going over the heads of the elected workplace representatives who are the only living link between the rank and file and the union. Members were then expected to vote as isolated private citizens, their opinions shaped more by the anti-union media than by any collective democratic discussion in their workplaces or branches. ■

democracy less possible even if actively fought for, by removing elections out of the structures of collective meetings within the union. Ironically, it does this under the banner of elevating "the role of the individual member"! In future the election of the three National Officers, and of the regional and national Executive Councils (in the event of any contest!) "shall be conducted on the principle of proportional representation, each benefit member of the Union having a single transferable vote ... all procedures ... to be determined by the National Executive". This is the change most advertised by the bureaucracy. The FWUI propaganda journal repeatedly describes this as a system of "one-member-one-vote".

of the union. All rank and file members including those who never turn up at a meeting will be able to send in a ballot without ever participating in collective discussion of the issues or hearing the candidates or their points of view. Indeed, the bourgeois media will also weigh in against any radical candidate for national office in the "one big union". That is the nature of the "secret ballot of all the members". In essence it means taking trade union decision-making out of the context of collective discussion and meetings. It is a major threat to the independence of the unions from the pressures of the lies and distortions of the capitalist-dominated media.

The launching of SIPTU itself is a perfect example of

pass the pressure of the active branch members.

Previously, delegates to conference were elected in the FWUI by the members at the AGM of a branch. For example the 1989 AGM of the No.15 branch, with 2,200 members, was attended by only 70 members — the most active and political members — who elected 22 delegates to represent the branch at Conference. Formally it was a democratic process within which a determined rank-and-file opposition might exert real influence.

Procedures were shabbier in the ITGWU where the delegates to Conference were often selected by a tiny Branch Committee, a handful of volunteers who re-nominated

## LEFT SECTARIANISM PREVENTS CAMPAIGN AGAINST SIPTU

THE TRADE UNION bureaucracy has been able to carry through the SIPTU merger without any organized opposition from the Irish left. Neither the Workers Party nor the Communist Party, both holding important positions in the bureaucracy, made public criticism of SIPTU. All of the "far left", however, criticized it as designed to serve the interests of the bureaucrats themselves and as a definite move in the "new realist" direction which has led to overt yellow trade unionism in the EETPU in Britain.

There was a clear need for a fighting campaign in which the far left could have at least begun to mobilize some of the elements of a future rank-and-file opposition within SIPTU, even if the chances of stopping the merger on the present terms were slim.

The Socialist Workers Movement, at its conference 4/5 March, debated the need for a campaign on SIPTU. Their resolution concluded:

*Over the next few months the SWM will initiate a limited campaign titled: Joint Campaign for Union Democracy to oppose the amalgamation on the present terms and to link it with the union leaders' support for the National Plan.*

*Such a campaign will be called into being by a sponsorship list of our members in positions; it shall call a national meeting; it will organise a number of public meetings and produce a broadsheet with its arguments.*

*Comrades should see such a campaign as a limited part of our overall perspective. Its primary purpose shall be to broaden out our range of contacts in the un-*

*ions and to work with other militants with a view to recruitment.* (our emphasis).

This was a thoroughly sectarian approach to the struggle. The primary aim was not to be to oppose SIPTU or create the elements of a rank and file movement but to recruit to SWM. The only principled way revolutionaries should recruit is by demonstrating that they are genuinely committed to advancing the struggle as the primary aim. That obviously means fighting to unite the widest possible forces for common goals. SWM tried to set up an exclusive and sectarian front using only their own members as sponsors to give it credibility among trade unionists. They produced a broadsheet *Say No to SIPTU* for which, apparently, they could not muster enough sponsors of their own to justify publishing any names at all. The bulletin, produced in mid-March, promised a single public meeting on 24th April, when the postal ballot of the members would already be under way!

SWM's position also skipped over the need to fight right up to the special delegate conferences on 15 April to bring the merger process under democratic control, to cancel the postal plebiscite and to win democratic conferences to debate and amend the rules and structures proposed. The IWG took up this fight, through resolutions at branch level, in both the ITGWU and FWUI, to bring the merger under democratic scrutiny of the membership. We know of no other attempts of this nature by the left.

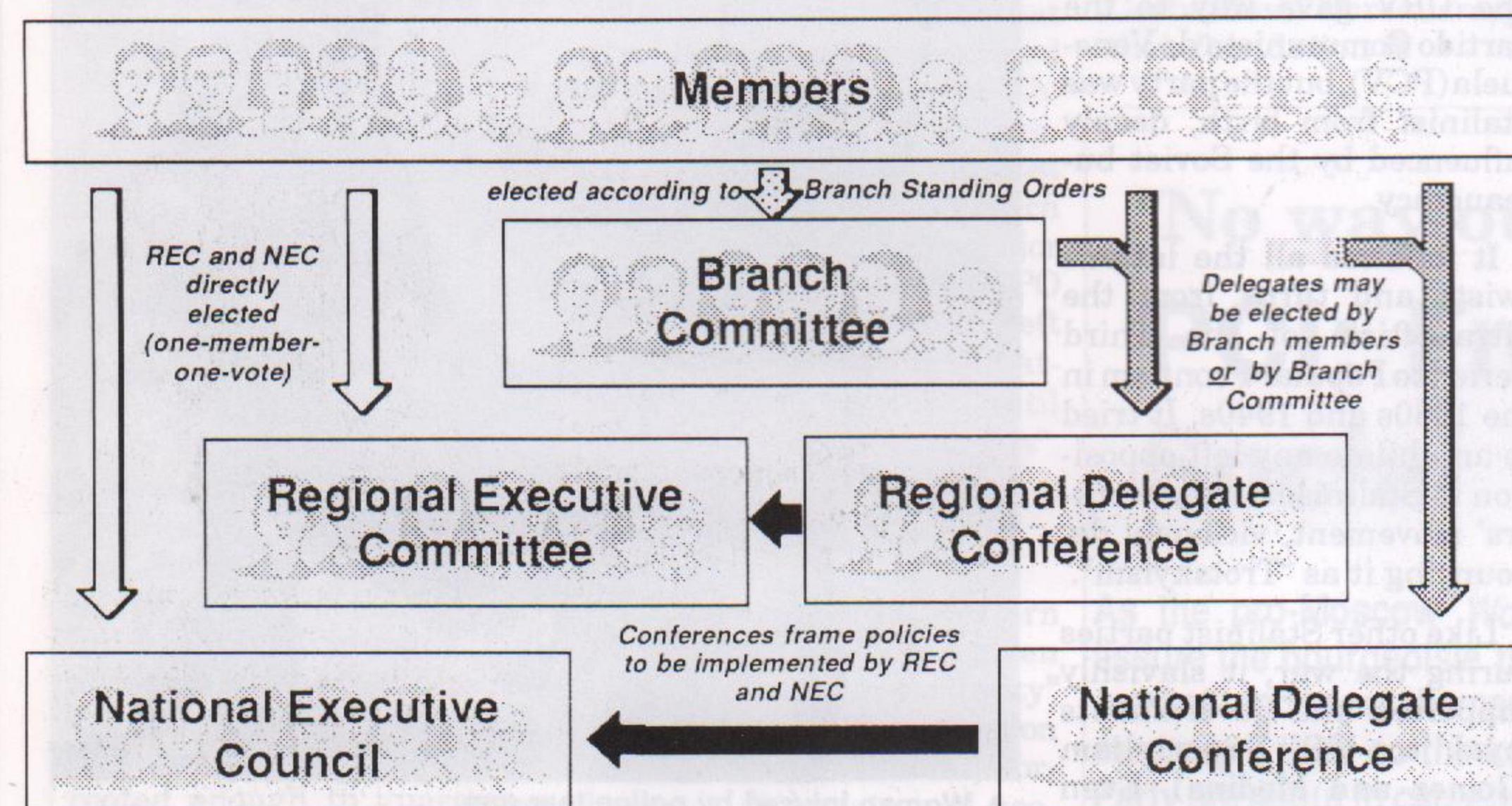
Faced with the public inaction of the much larger SWM and *Militant*, the IWG regarded it as a duty to try to initiate a united campaign to bring the merger under democratic

control, and failing that, to fight for the biggest possible vote against it. We wrote to every left group, inviting them to an open democratic meeting to jointly set up a committee. It was to be expected that the reformist and stalinist left would ignore it. However, the SWM and *Militant* also ignored the meeting (as did LWR, PD, IRSP, Sinn Féin etc.). Although several of these groups had members elected as delegates to the special union conferences, they were not even prepared to discuss any coordination of action by delegates at the conferences!

No new forces were drawn in to make a broad campaign possible. IWG then directed its call for a campaign against SIPTU to the delegates at these conferences, including the "far left" delegates and canvassers who were there. IWG members of the two unions issued a leaflet to the conferences "SIPTU — Not on These Terms" which made the case against the merger terms and called for an action committee meeting the following week. Again, the far left groups boycotted it and did nothing. All too easily demoralized by the scale of the contrived vote at the FWUI conference, these "revolutionaries" could not summon up the will to attempt a united campaign to oppose SIPTU in the postal ballot.

Such a campaign begun only in mid April would have had little success, but that little success could have established a first vital marker for the unavoidable fight that lies ahead to build a rank and file movement in opposition to the bureaucracy in a massive new organisation to which more than 1 in 3 Irish workers will soon belong. ■

## An Outline of the Main Structures of the New Union



### Choosing the Leadership

At the FWUI special conference, Attley painted a picture of candidates for the NEC and the offices having to campaign around the country to win a mandate. On that basis, he claimed, it was justified to extend the NEC term of office to 4 years. (The 3 Officers hold power for 6 years!) What he did not point out, as did one delegate at Malahide, is that this makes it impossible for anyone other than a well-placed official or someone with strong backing from the National Executive to challenge the entrenched leadership.

At present, the election of national officers and the executive takes place at annual delegate conferences where delegates are presumed to be free to judge the merits of the candidates and vote accordingly. In the absence of any organized rank and file opposition, however, the reality is very different and very sordid. Branch delegates are usually told how to vote by a "whip" who negotiates and trades favours with similar "whips" from other Branches — this without any basis in existing union rules! The driving force behind such manoeuvres is almost always... the unelected official (branch secretary) and branch committee members closest to him or her. Formally, however, the rules would not prevent a determined opposition grouping in either union from rejecting such wheeler-dealing and mounting a real challenge to the leadership. In SIPTU, things will be very different.

this process. A plebiscite of the members, for or against SIPTU, is being conducted by a postal ballot. The bourgeois media and the politicians lined up in support even before the members received any information. The activists in the union, who would normally alert the members to what issues are at stake, were contemptuously brushed aside and denied any influence in determining the terms of the merger.



In this way the entrenched leadership appeals over the heads of the activists to the generality of the members, banking their hopes on the lack of debate, on the uninformed state of the most uncommitted members. It is a graphic model of how SIPTU leadership elections will be conducted in the decades ahead. At all costs, by-pass and deflect the pressure of the most activist sections of the union rank and file!

### Delegates to SIPTU Conferences

The last chance of union activists to exert any pressure within the formal structures is as delegates to the national conference every two years. But how are they to be chosen? The rules outline two alternative procedures both of which, again, attempt to by-

themselves annually at a badly attended AGM. The key difference was that ITGWU full-time unelected officials were automatically delegates of their branches to Conference. In the FWUI — and in SIPTU — this is not permitted. The officials must exert their influence over Conference delegates from behind the scenes — as they do with little difficulty in the FWUI!

In SIPTU, delegates to conferences may be selected by the Branch Committee or else elected by a "secret ballot of all the members". In either case there is a clear determination to remove it out of the hands of the active members who attend the AGM of the branch!

Rule 43 makes it clear that the typical Branch Committee will continue to be a largely self-appointed group of volunteers who put themselves forward at the Branch AGM. It has no fixed size — it may be as few as four, or it may accept all who volunteer. In practice such committees are incapable of any independence of the full-time officials who control their meetings.

Branch committees are tightly strait-jacketed by "custom and practice". They have usually been denied all right to issue public statements without approval from the national officers, or to affiliate to working-class campaigns or to send delegates to the larger urban Trades councils. Only a determined rank and file movement could hope to turn such committees into organs of partial inspection and control over the bureaucrats and make them a focus for the struggles of the rank and file. ■

## Women in SIPTU

SIPTU guarantees places for three women among the 42 members of the National Executive, and one woman in each Regional Executive. If the national leadership election does not choose three or more women, the reserved places will be filled by co-option by the male Executive! A quota of reserved seats for women can be an important counter-weight to the powerful bias towards male dominance in the trade unions, but it must be linked to the increased organization of women to play a fuller role in the union. Amazingly, no formal status is given to the existing practice of an annual women's consultative conference in the union.

The 15th May FWUI conference at Malahide heard a series of confused protests from delegates about the empty tokenism of the SIPTU provision for co-opting women. The new rules, however, are entirely consistent with the NEC.

Such a conference, developed in a democratic relation to the women members in general through mandatory delegates, ought to be the body to elect women to reserved positions on the National Executive which should not be subject to co-option by the male Executive. Of course, women members should also be fully eligible for election by the general membership to the NEC.

The 15th May FWUI conference at Malahide heard a series of confused protests from delegates about the empty tokenism of the SIPTU provision for co-opting women. The new rules, however, are entirely consistent with the

chauvinist traditions of both union leaderships. In the early '80s when the women's conference of the FWUI wanted to debate "controversial" issues of sexuality, abortion etc. the male leadership took control of their agenda, chaired their meetings and told them what they could not debate. After several years' experience of these conferences Attley & Co. laid down a set of procedures restricting the women's conference. These were imposed on the union without the right of the annual conference to amend them in any way, and against the loud protests of almost every woman delegate who spoke on the issue at the 1985 FWUI conference.

## Industrial Action

The lengthy statement of "objects" of SIPTU makes no mention whatever of the defence of the wages, jobs or conditions of workers. They empower the union to own property, publish, raise funds etc., but the economic struggle is expressed only in an empty shibboleth — "the attainment of full economic freedom and for the purpose of establishing Industrial and political democracy in Ireland". Rather than represent the interests of labour against capital, however, the first object of the union is stated as "the regulation of the relations between employers and employed,

sometimes their action must be immediate to be effective. SIPTU's position in such circumstances is to stand by and let their members be isolated and defeated. This rule must be the first to go in any struggle to transform the union into a fighting force.

Secondly, a secret ballot must be held before any action can be taken. This finally establishes by rule what has become the practice

>>>

over recent years under pressure of bourgeois demands. In effect it prevents the members, faced with possible strike action, from seeing and understanding how their various sections and activists are voting. It is a step towards isolating the decision entirely from the process of open debate and election of the best fighting leaders. It is a step towards giving deliberate weight to the least active members.

Thirdly, the unelected Branch

Official has total authority over the elected strike committee, and finally, the National Executive can terminate any strike at its discretion.

Such powers in the hands of the self-interested brokers between capital and labour are an invitation to perpetual sabotage of workers' class struggle. They are not new to SIPTU, which, however has given itself the special mission to persuade workers that the class struggle is out of date! ■

## SIPTU: The Unemployed

SIPTU includes in its objects "the development of a Social Solidarity Service (S.S.S.) for and in aid of unemployed, disabled or retired members". Advertising the union's concern for the unemployed, *Unity* promises "education and training programmes to help people help themselves in setting up co-operatives, literacy skills, business skills..." etc. It lists 8 "enterprises" started up by 70 unemployed members of the FWU with union money levied at 10p per member per week. Some of this money has in fact been used to keep workers in jobs where the employer claimed inability to pay their wages any longer, for example in Trinity College. Not only are such schemes no answer to the threat of redundancy, they are a dangerous diversion from struggle to defend our conditions.

Token schemes for a handful of workers are no substitute for organizing all the unemployed. That means funding full-time organizers. It means actively recruiting into unemployed sections of the unions where they can make their interests felt and win the action of the strong to solidarize with the weak in the fight for the shorter working week and for public works schemes to create jobs for all. Despite Ireland having Western Europe's highest unemployment rate, SIPTU fails to provide for the recruitment or organizing of the

unemployed. Rule 25 merely proposes a reduced contribution rate for existing members who become unemployed.

SIPTU's "Social Solidarity Service" is pure tokenism, directed to tiny numbers of members, usually after the union has negotiated away their jobs! It "is aimed at making the new Union more obviously a part of local and national life" (*Unity special*, p.11), in other words, to enhance the image of the union bureaucrats as "concerned" about social inequality and deprivation in much the same way as the bourgeoisie organizes charity.

A serious approach to the important questions of mutual aid would instead create a trade union-controlled bank and credit unions for members' savings and for union fighting funds. Such developments would enormously strengthen an independently organized working class — as would the creation of a serious trade union newspaper and trade-union broadcasting.

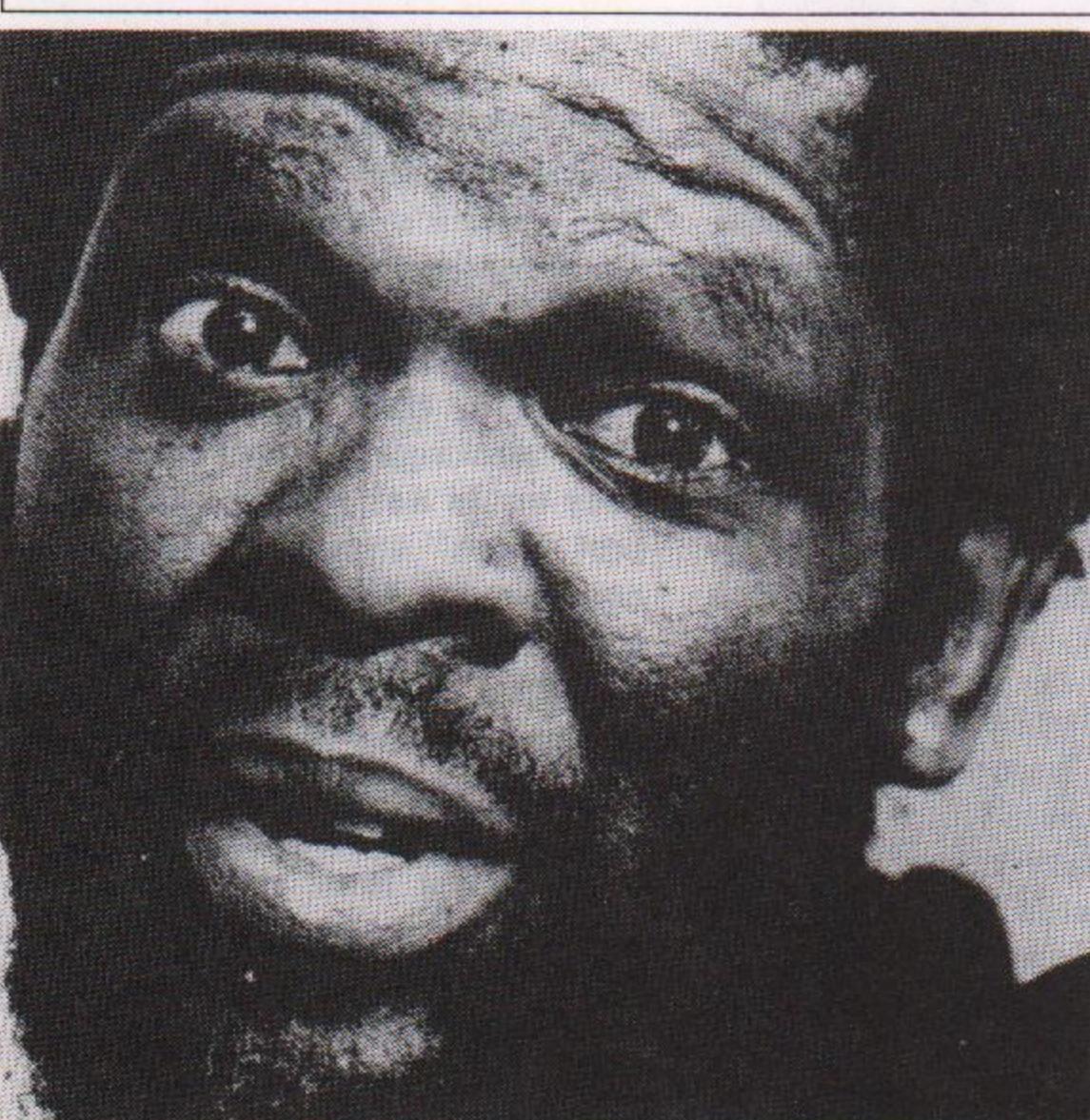
For all their bluster about modernisation, Attley, Carroll & Co. are too deeply compromised with the Irish bourgeoisie to dare to address the realities of the working class today with the bold moves that are urgently necessary to transform the unions into a fighting class force. ■

## PERMANENT REVOLUTION 8

Theoretical journal of the Workers Power Group

- Revolutionary theory and imperialism
- Defending the French revolution
- Militant, Marxism and the state
- Broué's Trotsky

Available from *Class Struggle*. Price £2.00 p&p



## Release Mayekiso

Moses Mayekiso is still on trial for "treason" in South Africa. He is general secretary of the Metalworkers union and stands openly for a socialist solution to the anti-apartheid struggle. Hence his case has been cynically played down by the Anti-Apartheid Movement and the ANC which openly advocate a purely bourgeois-democratic South Africa.

When Khola Mayekiso, herself a union leader toured Ireland and Britain in April, the Irish left, tragically, failed to organize any public meeting to rally support for Moses. The Mayekiso campaign of a year ago was liquidated by the SWM for their own sectarian considerations. And during Khola's visit Militant organized a picket on BTR/Dunlop which she attended, but they did not contact other left groups or organize any open meeting.

Despite such sectarian obstacles, the solidarity fight must be taken up in the unions to demand Mayekiso's unconditional release and to campaign for workers' sanctions against all trade with South Africa. ■

# Crisis in the semi-colonies

## JORDAN

THE RIOTS which spread across Jordan in April against the government's announced price increases of between 15% and 50% in a whole range of foodstuffs and vital services, starkly point once more to the growing desperation of the masses in the world semi-colonies. The price rises in Jordan were the result of measures imposed upon the Jordanian ruling class by the International Monetary Fund

(IMF) in order that Jordan qualify for a loan of \$275 million. The IMF is the key international economic policy instrument through which the major western imperialist powers ensure their continued economic and financial domination of the 'Third World'. But its policy of blood-sucking loans does not mean for a second that the economic and social consequences are borne by the ruling classes of the semi-colonies.

On the contrary, their role as part of the world capitalist 'club' is to ensure that the working masses

and peasants continue to pay the price and tribute demanded both by world imperialism and the maintenance of their own class privilege and rule. Jordan, already in debt to world imperialism to the tune of \$6 billion has recently suffered the collapse of its oil revenues and secondly, the ending of its subsidies from Saudi Arabia. The latter, in fact, had been deliberately aimed at ensuring social peace between the impoverished masses of Jordan and the corrupt oligarchy of rulers under the odious Hussein as part of the

Saudi inspired common front of Arab states against Israel.

The denar has slumped by 35% in a few months. Per capita income has fallen from \$2,000 in the mid '80's to \$1,200 today. The poor, the peasants and the workers in the south have been the worst victims, even more than the Palestinian refugees who make up 60% of the Jordanian population. Significantly, the power of the Jordanian ruling class has rested on this indigenous mass base for its support now all that looks like changing. ■

## VENEZUELA

VENEZUELA HAS long been the most prosperous state in Latin America and what the United States' media calls a "shop window of Democracy".

On 26 February, that window display was demolished by the stones, sticks and even the bare hands of the impoverished masses from the "ranchos" (shanty towns), disillusioned and furious with Perez. Only months before, he had swindled them into voting for him on the promise that he would stand up to the IMF.

Perez entered office with invitations to Fidel Castro, Daniel Ortega and the US Vice-President to attend his inauguration. He offered to play a mediating role in the civil war in El Salvador. Yet within months, the IMF had persuaded him to launch an austerity package which meant a 90% increase in petrol prices and transport costs. The masses of the shanty towns descended by their hundreds of thousands into the glittering consumer paradise of central Caracas to demonstrate against this savage attack on the poor.

They were met by police and military repression and days of struggle ensued. The unarmed masses were gunned down in their hundreds by the hirelings of the IMF and the Western banks. The massacre brings home the utter subordination of Latin America's governments to the imperialist banks.

The masses' rage gave them enormous courage but alas they had no revolutionary leadership. The reason for this lies in the history of Venezuela.

### Growth

Between 1921 and 1930 Venezuela experienced a rapid and deep economic penetration by foreign capital, in particular from North America. Oil production expanded from 69,000 tons in 1920 to 20 million tons in 1930. This decade saw economic development, based on oil, change the features of Venezuelan society. There was a massive growth of the proletariat and the emergence of a modern urban middle class.

In exile in the United States in 1924, the Union Revolucionaria Venezolana was founded. In 1928, one of its founders, Ricardo Martinez, attended the fourth congress of the Red International of

Labour Unions in Moscow. The URV gave way to the Partido Comunista de Venezuela (PCV), but the party was Stalinist from birth, deeply influenced by the Soviet bureaucracy.

It followed all the latter's twists and turns from the ultra-leftism of the Third Period to Popular Frontism in the 1930s and 1940s. It tried to annihilate any left opposition to Stalinism in the workers' movement, viciously denouncing it as "Trotskyism".

Like other Stalinist parties during the war, it slavishly supported the governments loyal to US Imperialism (Gomez and Medina). Even when the war ended, in the name of continuing the National Anti-Fascist Front they clung to General Medina Angarita's regime.

The PCV paid dearly for its servility and was completely discredited when the government fell to a coup d'état in October 1945. This coup was led by young army officers and Accion Democratica (AD), a bourgeois nationalist party of which Carlos Andres Perez is the present leader.

The 1945-48 civilian-military regime of the party's founder Romulo Betancourt conceded serious economic and social reforms to the labour movement at the same time as splitting off the more radical left elements and creating a docile reformist trade unionism. Accion Democratica, flush with oil revenues from renegotiated agreements with the USA created a trade union bureaucracy that kept the labour movement subordinate to this bourgeois national party.

The repeated betrayals of the Venezuelan Stalinists are the real reasons why the masses found themselves without a leadership when they collided headlong with the party which they had long thought was their own. These betrayals have not all been of a right opportunist character. The party has occasionally indulged in adventurist zig-zags.

Thus in 1962, together with the MIR (Movimiento Izquierdo Revolucionaria—Movement of the Revolutionary Left) they launched a three year guerrilla campaign. This only further weakened the labour movement, tying it yet closer to Accion Democratica.



▲ Woman injured by police tear gas

These foquista (guerrilla) years of the PCV produced a split in its ranks. The MAS (Movement Towards Socialism) was born, initially calling itself Marxist-Leninist but later accommodating to a "historic bloc" with the urban middle classes and Christian sectors.

The MIR, the PCV's guerrilla partner, has ended its evolution as a reformist organisation with pronounced social democratic inclinations.

The enormous economic strength which oil production gave Venezuela, combined with the disastrous policies of the PCV, enabled it to sustain an almost entirely bourgeois political line on a formally "democratic" basis. Bourgeois parties (COPEI and AD) alternated in power and the Accion Democratica domesticated and incorporated the unions throughout the long Venezuelan boom.

### New uprising

The boom has ended and the country has suffered a sharp decline as a result of the fall in oil prices. Over the last five years it has been paying out 50% of its oil revenue to service its debt (32 billion dollars).

In the last year, debt service charges took 70% of the country's oil revenue. During the boom years the Venezuelan bourgeoisie failed to significantly develop the country's industrial base.

They demonstrated their parasitic nature by investing in property, financial speculation, commerce, transport and construction instead.

The uprising expresses the masses' deep disillusionment with the AD and their hatred

of imperialist domination. The economic, social and political conditions are present today for the Venezuelan proletariat to break from the AD's tutelage. But they will not be able to do so without shedding at the same time the rotten legacy of Stalinism.

### Action Programme

An action programme is needed to rally the forces of class independence, of revolutionary struggle against the IMF and its loyal servant—the Venezuelan bourgeoisie. It should start by demanding that the foreign and domestic capitalists pay the cost of their crisis. The external debt should be repudiated and the austerity programme revoked.

Instead a programme to devote all of the country's resources into a programme of public works, to put the unemployed to work, is needed. A sliding scale of wages must protect the working class against inflation. The nationalisation of imperialist and "national" capitalist property is necessary to carry out these measures.

Needless to say, neither bourgeois nationalist parties nor Stalinist reformist parties can mobilise the workers to fight for this programme. For this the Venezuelan proletariat, leading the urban and rural poor needs a revolutionary workers' party built on genuine Leninist and Trotskyist foundations.

Now it is vital to break the trade union federation, the CTV, with over a million and a half members, from the AD, oust the corrupt bureaucrats and regain the unions for the rank and file. ■

# Southern Africa: Peace on whose terms?

"LONG LIVE Comrade Thatcher" said one banner in Zimbabwe during Thatcher's recent African tour. It was a sickening sight. But it confirms that her strategy for southern Africa—a peaceful transition to limited independence in Namibia and negotiated reforms in South Africa—involves enlisting the support of the black leaders of the "front line states".

Though Mugabe of Zimbabwe and Chissano of Mozambique differed in their degrees of enthusiasm for her project, both have indicated that they believe she is on the right course. Both see in this imperialist ruler a politician who can at least make the apartheid state listen to proposals for change.

The bosses of the major imperialist powers know that the relative peace of the last two years in South Africa has been achieved only by the apartheid state's massive use of brutal repression. The attempts by the Nationalist Party regime to create an incorporated black middle class keep running up against the contradictions of apartheid itself. The black trade unions are still growing, and although union bureaucracies are growing too, they are nowhere near established and rooted enough to guarantee class peace.

The western imperialists, together with their allies amongst South African "progressive" business interests, want to make the country safe for capitalism. This means a gradual process of reform: gradual enough to allow the Nationalists time to convince a significant section of their white working class base that change is inevitable—but fast enough to convince substantial sections of the black opposition that they too can satisfy their supporters that real change is on the way.

The rewards of success would be enormous—the continued exploitation of the huge natural resources and the labour of South Africa, together with the further opening up of the mineral wealth of Angola and Namibia. The price of failure will be equally dramatic—the spectre of revolution looms large in the nightmares of South African bosses and western investors.

Thatcher and her US backers are hoping that the leadership shifts inside the Nationalist Party will bring in a group seeking a faster pace of change. There is no guarantee that this will happen, but US imperialism and its allies are already buoyed by the apparent success of the Namibia/Angola settlement.

This involves the removal of Cuban troops, the confirmation of Angola's presence within the fold of imperialism, and an end to the long war of liberation in Namibia. South African imperialism is proving relatively willing to reconcile itself to the settlement. The terms of the deal leave Pretoria with an economic and strategic stranglehold on the country through its control of the deep sea port

at Walvis Bay, and a continuing influence on the security forces inside Namibia. At the same time, the African National Congress (ANC) is losing its bases inside Angola.

However, if the struggle in Namibia looks like getting out of hand, there is no doubt that the South African armed forces will pour in—notwithstanding the UN peacekeeping force—and do their utmost to smash SWAPO. This much was clear when, after a major border clash between SWAPO and South Africa which left 142 dead, Pik Botha threatened military action "until SWAPO comes to its senses".

## Kremlin treachery

Thatcher and the western imperialists have been given this "window of opportunity" by the conscious intervention of the Soviet Union. Gorbachev's diplomats and academics have been busy persuading Moscow's clients that they must subordinate their own struggle in the interests of global harmony. First the Angolan leadership was told that the USSR would no longer underwrite the costs of the Cuban presence. SWAPO was encouraged to come to the negotiating table. And over the last year the ANC leadership has been under increasing pressure to modify its stance on the armed struggle and the prospects for a deal inside South Africa, that is, a negotiated settlement that would leave power in capitalist hands.

The Soviet Union and the major imperialist powers would like to settle the fate of the South African masses over their heads. The danger is, that despite some critical noises about the "new course" from inside the ANC leadership, the fundamentals of the ANC's existing political programme open the road to retreat. The ANC's "Freedom Charter" is a programme for a capitalist South Africa, purged of apartheid laws. The influential South African Communist Party has always made clear that it sees the achievement of national liberation and democracy as the immediate task. Fighting for socialism is postponed to a later date.

At present the ANC is making the release of its leaders, especially Mandela, and the legalisation of its activities, preconditions for talks and an end to the armed struggle. It is not clear yet whether the Nationalist Party can deliver such substantial changes, or whether Moscow will have to exert further influence on the ANC.

Political reforms—even the

extension of the franchise and the removal of more apartheid restrictions—will not solve the problems of oppression and exploitation of the South African black working class. Land hunger will feed the pressure on the cities. The squeeze on profits will mean the bosses continuing to keep wages down and using the laws and forces of the state to enforce their class rule. Meanwhile, the South African working class would be disarmed both literally and politically.

Democratic rights and other gains won in struggle can only be made permanent if the capitalist class and its state are overthrown. But both Thatcher and Gorbachev are determined to prevent that outcome. Workers revolution in South Africa will act as a beacon to workers everywhere and in doing so will shake both Thatcher's class, and Gorbachev's bureaucracy, to their foundation ■



▲ Thatcher meets British member of UN force in Namibia

## "No way out of capitalism"

# PCI: From Stalinism to Social Democracy

As the pro-Moscow Workers Party in Ireland rushes to assure the bourgeoisie that it is no longer "opposed to the market" and to put themselves in the "vanguard of social democracy", their co-thinkers in Italy, the Italian Communist Party are about to carry through the full logic of the same reformist politics.

Achille Occhetto, the leader of the Italian Communist Party (PCI) elected in June last year, outlined the party's "new course" in his keynote speech to the party congress.

This course aims to integrate the PCI into European social democracy by removing the last traces of the programme which links it to Stalinism and the Soviet Union. (Its links with Leninism were severed long ago.)

Occhetto is openly pressing to be allowed to join the Socialist International. More immediately the party has set its sights on joining the social democratic group of deputies in Strasbourg after the European elections in June.

Occhetto is not afraid of disposing of old shibboleths in the "post-communist" PCI. Having been told by the German SPD and other Socialist International leaders that the name "communist" might be an obstacle, he and the other PCI leaders have decided to be rid of it. After all what's in a name?

Of course this was not done before the congress (why worry the members?), but all those in the know believe they will be members of an "Italian Labour Party" within a year. Hammers and sickles on the Party flags were believed to be another "embarrassment" that will soon be dropped.

These important symbolic changes reflected a deep and thoroughgoing transformation of the Party that has been underway since the early 1980's.

First there was the failure of the Euro-communist project. Then the principal lesson the PCI drew from the overthrow of Allende in 1973 was that he and the Chilean Communists had failed to draw into their popular front the major section of the bourgeoisie represented by the Christian Democracy.

Therefore in Italy the PCI launched its quest for an "historic compromise", for a coalition government between itself and the Italian Christian Democracy.

Despite the PCI's attempts to prove itself to the bosses as a reliable governmental partner, its support for NATO and constant attacks on the "Soviet Model", the Italian ruling class refused to accept the offer. Between 1976 and 1979 the PCI, in return for a few chairs of parliamentary committees, kept Andreotti's Christian Democratic government in power while it attacked the workers through austerity measures. The result was a decline in the Party's working class base and especially in its support amongst Italian youth.

## Trouble

By the mid-1980's the party was in serious trouble. Its vote fell from a high of 34.5% in 1976 to 26.6% in the 1987 elections. Meanwhile its rival on the reformist left, the Italian Socialist party, continued its electoral growth.

The conclusion that the party leadership drew from this decline was not that its right wing politics were losing its support, but that it needed to make a definitive break with its communist and Stalinist past in order to be accepted by the Italian and European bosses (and of course by the Americans) as a suitable partner in government.

The debate before the previous congress in 1986 revealed the growing strength of this view within the party. Lucian Lama is the leader of the main Italian trade union organisation, the CGIL, which is dominated by the PCI.

He said in an interview in 1986 that the PCI should henceforth orient itself to a struggle to improve the present system and drop any "abstract conceptual exercises about a 'fuoriuscita' [way out] of

capitalism". He ended by declaring that "most Italian communists, if they were in Germany, would be in the SPD". It is this right wing which now represents a majority following the recent Congress.

On the economy Occhetto has made a name for himself by being an outspoken supporter of the market mechanism. His two and a half hour speech to this year's Congress referred to it as the necessary "measure of efficiency in the whole economy". This is a theme he has made his and his Party's own.

In 1985 he declared it was necessary "to surmount the false alternative between statism and neo-liberalism". It is little wonder that "comrade" Occhetto has declared that the PCI identifies more closely with the (bourgeois) principles of the French Revolution than with most of the October Revolution in Russia.

These moves have not gone unopposed. Pietro Ingrao and more openly Amando Cossutta represent a "Stalinist" opposition in the sense that they oppose the complete liquidation of the party into social democracy, and in particular the criticisms of the Soviet Union.

Cossutta was removed from the leadership at the 27th Congress but remained on the Central Committee. He probably carries the support of 10% of the Party and has a stronger base in the apparatus.

But in no sense do these leaders represent any "left" critique from the point of view of revolutionary communism. Both refer back to the tradition of Togliatti, the leader after the war who laid down many of the foundations of the current PCI's politics, and even to Berliner, architect of the "historic compromise". Cossutta was proud to declare in L'Unità before the last Congress his agreement with the "gradualist line which marks the history of the party".

The opposition were not helped at the March Congress by an especially friendly greeting from Gorbachev who virtually endorsed the "new course" by drawing a

positive parallel between the PCI's search for "new solutions and the new problems of our time" and the CPSU's Perestroika.

## Cheering

It is little surprise that hardly before the social democratic ink was dry on the PCI Congress resolutions Martin Jacques, one time guru of the British Eurocommunists, was cheering the death of Euro-communism in his regular column in the scab Murdoch paper the *Sunday Times*.

"The International Communist movement is dead", crows the editor of *Marxism Today*.

"Gorbachev envisages a relationship between a range of political forces and traditions. His vision is pluralistic . . . Gorbachev, like Euro-Communism, further erases the distinctive character of communist parties and serves to emphasise the discontinuity in the Communist tradition".

For Jaques Euro-Communism was only a staging-post on the road to social democracy and to a lasting alliance with the bosses' parties.

Indeed the Stalinist movement's international organisation (the Comintern) is long dead, killed by Stalin's concept of socialism in one country.

In 1928, Trotsky pointed out that if you believed socialism could be realised within the national boundaries of backward Russia then so it could be in every other individual country. "It will be the beginning of the disintegration of the Comintern along the lines of Social Patriotism".

Long ago the parties of the Stalinist Comintern travelled this road offering support for their own bosses in times of war and peace.

There always remained the possibility however, given these parties' links with the degenerated workers state in the USSR, that they could be forced—often for their own self-preservation—to expropriate the capitalists and reproduce a new degenerate workers' state, as in China, Vietnam etc.

The PCI is the first Stalinist party as a whole to consciously set about removing this fear for the bourgeoisie in order to gain governmental power. If it overcomes the internal opposition and completes its transformation it will no doubt become the model for many more.

## SUBSCRIBE!

To make sure you get a copy of *Class Struggle* each month, take out a subscription.

To get the next ten issues, send £6 (outside Ireland and Britain send £9) to: J.Larkin, c/o 12 Langrishe Place, Dublin 1, Ireland.

Make cheques/postal orders payable to *Class Struggle*.



Irish  
Workers  
Group

# Class Struggle

## Nicaragua: only workers' power can Resist US Imperialism

The insurrection of 19 July, 1979 which finally overthrew the Somoza regime in Nicaragua was of enormous importance worldwide. It was the most thorough-going democratic revolution in Latin America since the July 26th movement of Fidel Castro destroyed the Batista regime in Cuba in 1959. And just as Cuba became a beacon of resistance to US backed dictatorships and tyranny, so too did Nicaragua. For that reason US imperialism for ten years has pledged itself to overthrow the FSLN led government in Nicaragua.

In that fight for survival with US and world imperialism the Irish Workers Group stand unconditionally in support of the FSLN government, and salute the undying courage and heroism of the Nicaraguan masses and freedom fighters who not only overthrew Somoza but for the last ten years have successfully resisted and finally defeated the murder gangs of the US backed Contras.

The building of a mass solidarity movement in Ireland, as elsewhere, has been and remains a vital task for Irish socialists because while the USA has suffered a major setback with the defeat of the Contras, it continues to plot the downfall of the FSLN regime. The visit to Ireland of the Sandinista leader, Daniel Ortega, should be the occasion for such an initiative for the Irish left. It should also provide an opportunity for serious debate and analysis about the nature of the Nicaraguan revolution and the FSLN regime.

There are those in Ireland, particularly within the republican movement, who hold that the Nicaraguan revolution and Nicaraguan society represent the kind of socialism that they themselves aspire to. But while the Nicaraguan revolution did indeed weaken the grip of US imperialism on Nicaragua, it did not get rid of capitalism and it did not establish a socialist society under the control of the workers and peasants. In that fact, we believe, lies many of the problems and weaknesses that cripple Nicaraguan society in the face of the enemy, US imperialism.

The Sandinistas adopted the strategy of a broad multi-class alliance in the mid-1970s to bring down Somoza. This was increasingly possible as wider sections of the

capitalist class and the middle classes were being more and more alienated from Somoza. Such a multi-class alliance against Somoza was not wrong in itself. Genuine revolutionaries against capitalism would have struggled to create a united front with all other sections, even if led by bourgeois forces, provided they were genuinely involved in struggle against imperialism and Somoza.

But an absolute pre-condition of such unity in action would be for communists to make absolutely clear their

*tion and socialism.*"

They were unanimous that the period of "popular democracy" would involve the reconstruction of a mixed economy, that is, a capitalist Nicaragua. None of them believed that the outcome of the struggle would mean the overthrow of bourgeois rule and the establishment of a workers' state. It was this agreed perspective which in fact allowed them to form a government of National Reconstruction with bourgeois representatives after the fall of Somoza.

three person Council of State which was to represent "all political, economic and social forces who had contributed to the overthrow of the Somoza dictatorship". The plans for the Council gave bourgeois organizations a clear majority; the programme guaranteed the rights of private property apart from those belonging to Somoza which were nationalized.

Communists, even while supporting democratic slogans such as that of a Constituent Assembly etc., would instead have made it a focus for winning the work-

police etc. had been completely smashed. The only armed force in the state was the Sandinista guerrilla "army" and the popular militias of mostly armed workers, students and the urban poor, very loosely under Sandinista leadership. Also in existence were Civil Defence committees encouraged and set up by the Sandinistas. During the city insurrections, they took on the form of proto-soviets organizing armed actions and administration of the cities once the Guard had been defeated.

Thus, a situation of dual power existed in Nicaragua. On the one side stood the movement of workers, peasants and poor, eager to throw off years of exploitation and oppression. On the other side stood the bourgeoisie, backed by imperialism but deprived of its crucial weapon, its direct control of the oppressive apparatus of the bourgeois state, the army and police. The government of National Reconstruction was similar in form, therefore, to the Provisional government in Russia that emerged out of the revolutionary crisis in 1917. It was a government made up of parties of "petit bourgeois democracy" in alliance with the bourgeoisie. In fact, it bore striking similarities to the government that emerged from the overthrow of Batista in 1959. Certainly, it was no normal bourgeois government. Everything pointed to the deep and (to the bourgeoisie frightening) duality of power in the state.

The perspectives of the FSLN had nothing in common with this method. They pursued the policy of the "popular front", tying the working class and urban poor and peasantry to the interests of the bourgeoisie! In guaranteeing private property rights in post-Somoza Nicaragua, in assuring the bourgeoisie that they had no intention of expropriating them after the revolution, the FSLN was reserving a place in government for the saboteurs of even the limited gains of 1979.

### Class nature of the Sandinista state

The new governing Junta, assumed power in a very different situation than first envisaged. The repressive apparatus of the bourgeois state, the National Guard,

of course, the Sandinista regime plays not a right wing Bonapartist role but a leftist one similar to the Cardenas regime that existed in Mexico in the 30's. It rests and draws its strength from the radicalized petit bourgeois sectors, the urban poor and, to an increasing extent in the 1980's, on the middle layer of peasant farmers. But despite its relative independence from the contending classes throughout its ten year rule there has never been a single doubt that it defended capitalist property as the basis of society. As one of its leaders, Tomas Borge, put it in a recent interview:

*"In Nicaragua, by contrast, the bourgeoisie is now a social sector of secondary importance but it is not eliminated, nor do we plan to eliminate it; quite the contrary, we have made substantial efforts to keep it in existence as an economic force."*

The Sandinistas emphasize that the bourgeoisie will be allowed to dominate the economy, as long as the FSLN are left "in control of" the state. This is the heart of the FSLN's utopian project of a "popular democracy" where the workers and peasants' representatives supposedly rule a democratic stage on the road to a distant socialist Nicaragua.

The history of the last ten years shows that this pact with Nicaraguan capitalism can only further undermine the economy and the gains of the masses and sabotage the resistance against US imperialism. Nothing less than the elimination of capitalism and the creation of a planned economy under workers' control can now rescue the gains of 1979 and open the road to genuine development. Such a revolutionary perspective must, however, reach out urgently to link with and aid the struggles in Salvador, Guatemala as part of an international revolutionary movement. There is no other way out of semi-colonial backwardness.

- Unconditional support and aid to Nicaragua against US Imperialism!
- For the overthrow of capitalism and for workers' power in Nicaragua, supported by the poor peasantry.
- For the Socialist Federation of Central America!



▲ President Daniel Ortega, centre, greets a rally celebrating of the 10th anniversary of the revolution.

own objectives in struggle, fighting to strengthen the workers' and poor peasant organizations. This meant never confusing their banner with that of the bourgeoisie but "striking together" through demonstrations, general strikes and armed action against the National Guard. Above all, there could be no common position with the bourgeoisie with regard to what kind of government should have replaced Somoza.

The Sandinistas in mid 1978 summed up their flawed, stage-ist, perspective for the struggle for "socialism":

*"The armed insurrection of the masses is a means to achieve the revolutionary overthrow of the Somoza dynasty and open up a process of popular democracy, which will allow our people to enjoy democratic liberties, a more favourable framework in which to accumulate the revolutionary energies required for the march towards full national libera-*

*tion and socialism."*

By June 1979 a Governing Junta of National Reconstruction (Junta) was formed in exile. It was a popular front made up of representatives of the FSLN (Ortega) and the Nicaraguan bourgeoisie, including the industrialist Alfonso Robelo, and Violeta de Chamorro, widow of the right wing owner of *La Prensa*, murdered by Somoza. An eighteen person Cabinet was named, composed predominantly of bourgeois figures belonging to the industrialists and the banking world of Nicaragua. The Minister of Defence was an ex-colonel of the National Guard, who deserted only in 1978. The new Governing Junta was endorsed by the FAO, a broad opposition front of the bourgeoisie formed in the last months of the Somoza regime, and the Superior Council of Private Enterprise, the largest employers grouping.

The Constituent Assembly which had been part of the FSLN's programme disappeared in favour of a thirty-